

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED:

1. A method of obtaining desired delivery times from intended recipients of items, comprising:

5 providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that overlap with one another in time from which the recipient may choose a time for delivery of an item; and receiving choices made by recipients from the plurality of overlapping time windows.

10 2. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 1, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential time windows and at least one overlapping time window that overlaps a portion of each of the sequential time windows.

15 3. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 2, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential two hour time windows and at least one overlapping time window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows by one hour.

20 4. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 2, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential one hour time windows and at least one overlapping time window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows by one-half hour.

25 5. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 1, wherein said providing step includes applying predetermined parameters to said plurality of time windows to determine which time windows of said plurality to offer to the recipients as available times from which the recipient may choose a time for delivery of
30 an item.

6. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 5, wherein said providing step includes determining which time windows of said plurality have associated with them the least cost of service in making the delivery.

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7. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 5, wherein said providing step includes determining whether the cost of delivering the item within a time window of said plurality is less than a monetary threshold.

10 8. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 5, wherein said providing step includes determining whether a maximum number of orders to be delivered within one of said plurality of time windows has been reached.

15 9. A method of obtaining desired delivery times from intended recipients of items, comprising:
creating a plurality of time windows that overlap with one another in time;
applying predetermined parameters to said plurality of time windows to identify a subset of time windows of said plurality to offer to recipients as available times for delivery;
20 providing each recipient with said subset of time windows from which the recipient may choose a time for delivery of an item; and
receiving choices made by recipients from said subset of said plurality of overlapping time windows.

25 10. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 9, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential time windows and at least one overlapping time window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows.

11. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 10, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential two hour time windows and at least one overlapping time window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows by one hour.

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12. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 10, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential one hour time windows and at least one overlapping time window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows by one half-hour.

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13. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 9, wherein said applying step includes determining which time windows of said plurality have associated with them the least cost of service in making the delivery.

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14. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 9, wherein said step of applying step includes determining whether the cost of delivering the item within a time window of said plurality is less than a monetary threshold.

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15. A method of obtaining desired delivery times as defined in Claim 9, wherein said applying step includes determining whether a maximum number of orders to be delivered within one of said plurality of time windows has been reached.

16. A method of delivering items, comprising:
offering delivery items for sale to recipients;
creating a plurality of time windows that overlap with one another in time;
applying predetermined parameters to the plurality of time windows to identify a subset of time windows of the plurality to offer to recipients as available times for delivery;

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providing each recipient with the subset of time windows from which the recipient may choose a time for delivery of an item;

receiving choices made by recipients from said subset of said plurality of overlapping time windows; and

5 delivering the items chosen by the recipient to a destination.

17. A method of delivering items as defined in Claim 16, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential time windows and at least one overlapping time window
10 that overlaps each of the sequential time windows.

18. A method of delivering items as defined in Claim 16, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential two hour time windows and at least one overlapping time
15 window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows by one hour.

19. A method of delivering items as defined in Claim 16, wherein said providing step includes providing each recipient with a plurality of time windows that include at least two sequential one hour time windows and at least one overlapping time
20 window that overlaps each of the sequential time windows by one-half hour.

20. A method of delivering items as defined in Claim 16, wherein said applying step includes determining which time windows of said plurality have associated with them the least cost of service in making the delivery.

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21. A method of delivering items as defined in Claim 20, wherein said applying step includes determining whether the cost of delivering the item within a time window of said plurality is less than a monetary threshold.

26. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as defined in Claim 24, wherein said offering step includes utilizing a scheduling engine to apply predetermined parameters to the plurality of time windows to identify a subset of time windows of the plurality to offer to the user as available times for delivery.

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27. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as defined in Claim 24, wherein said offering step includes utilizing a scheduling engine to determine which time windows of said plurality have associated with them the least cost of service in making the delivery.

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28. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as defined in Claim 24, wherein said offering step includes utilizing a scheduling engine to determine whether the cost of delivering the item within a time window of the plurality is less than a monetary threshold.

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29. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as defined in Claim 24, wherein said offering step includes utilizing a scheduling engine to determine whether a maximum number of orders to be delivered within one of said plurality of time windows has been reached.

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30. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as defined in Claim 24, wherein said delivering step includes utilizing a routing engine to determine the optimum delivery route for delivering the item to the user.

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31. A system for implementing an on-line program for delivering items, comprising:

an Internet webpage accessible to at least one user for on-line interactive communications between the user and the Internet webpage;

software for offering at least one item for sale to at least one user via the Internet webpage and for receiving delivery requests from the user;

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a first memory area for storing a plurality of time windows that overlap with one another in time from which the user may choose a time for delivery of an item;

a scheduling engine for determining available delivery time windows from the plurality of time windows stored in the first memory area and offering the available
5 delivery time windows to the user; and

a second memory area for receiving and storing delivery time window choices made by the user.

32. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as
10 defined in Claim 31, wherein the scheduling engine is programmed to apply predetermined parameters to the plurality of time windows to identify a subset of time windows of the plurality to offer to the user as available times for delivery.

33. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as
15 defined in Claim 31, wherein the scheduling engine is programmed to determine which time windows of said plurality have associated with them the least cost of service in making the delivery.

34. A method for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as
20 defined in Claim 31, wherein the scheduling engine is programmed whether the cost of delivering the item within a time window of the plurality is less than a monetary threshold.

35. A system for implementing an on-line program for delivering items as
25 defined in Claim 31, further comprising a routing engine programmed to determine the optimum delivery route for delivering the item to the user.

36. A computer-readable medium comprising computer-executable instructions for performing the steps of:
30 offering at least one item for sale to at least one user via an Internet webpage;

displaying a plurality of time windows that overlap with one another in time from which the user may choose a time for delivery of an item; and
receiving delivery time window choices made by the user.

5 37. The computer-readable medium of Claim 36, wherein said computer-readable medium further comprises computer-executable instructions for determining available delivery time windows from the plurality of time windows and offering the available delivery time windows to the user.

10 38. The computer-readable medium of Claim 36, wherein said computer-readable medium further comprises computer-executable instructions for applying predetermined parameters to the plurality of time windows to identify a subset of time windows of the plurality to offer to the user as available times for delivery.

15 39. The computer-readable medium of Claim 36, wherein said computer-readable medium further comprises computer-executable instructions for determining the optimum delivery route for delivering the item to the user.

20 40. A method of displaying delivery time windows to a recipient, said method comprising the steps of:

identifying a plurality of time windows that overlap in time in which a delivery may be made to a recipient;

25 applying predetermined parameters to the plurality of time windows to identify a subset of time windows of the plurality to offer to the recipient as available times for delivery; and

responsive to predetermined parameters, indicating that a subset of time windows of the plurality is available for delivery.